

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the above amendment, the claims will be 1 and 2.

The above amendment is responsive to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Claims 1-2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reznik in view of the Japanese patent to Kawasaki of record for reason of record.

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In the "Response to Arguments," the rejection contends that the machine translation of the JP secondary reference teaches impregnation of the alloy with hydrogen gas before contacting with water. This understanding of the difference between the JP reference and the present invention appears incorrect.

As is clear from claim 1, the present invention is directed to the washing treatment of foodstuffs with activated water prepared by a specific activation treatment. As is clear from claim 1, the foodstuff to be washed with the activated water is necessarily a solid foodstuff because a liquid foodstuff, e.g., beverage, cannot be washed with water.

In contrast, the objective matter in the Kawasaki method is limited to a water-base liquid. See paragraph [0001] where examples are given of the water-base liquids including beers, fruits or vegetable juices, teas, cow's milk and the like. Accordingly, the Kawasaki reference cannot be pertinent to the present invention, even as a secondary reference. No one could imagine washing beer with water.

Secondly, the method of the present invention is an indirect or two-step treatment method for a foodstuff consisting of the first step of activating water in a specific activation treatment and the second step of washing solid foodstuff with the water activated in the first step. In contrast, in the method of Kawasaki, an electrode of an electroconductive body is directly put into the water-base liquid such as beer and an electric or ultrasonic energy is applied to this electrode while hydrogen gas is blown into the liquid, to thereby remove the dissolved oxygen in the liquid.

Moreover, Kawasaki is silent on impregnation of the electrode with hydrogen gas, although perhaps if the electroconductive material forming the electrode were a hydrogen-absorbing metal or alloy, the electrode may absorb a small volume of hydrogen gas.

In sum, the method of Kawasaki is a method for direct removal of dissolved oxygen from a water-base liquid such as beer by blowing hydrogen gas into the liquid while the presently claimed method does not include a step of blowing hydrogen gas into the foodstuff for quality improvement.

In view of this most clear difference between the present invention and Kawasaki, this reference cannot be pertinent to the present invention, even as a secondary reference combined with Reznik primary reference.

The above arguments are not negated even by the teaching of Kawasaki patent that the hydrogen gas may be absorbed on (not 'absorbed by') the surface of the electroconductive body (electrode).

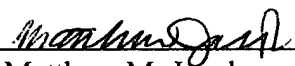
For the foregoing reasons, it is apparent that the rejection on prior art is untenable and should be withdrawn.

No further issues remaining, allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any comments or proposals for expediting prosecution, he is invited to contact undersigned at the below telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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